

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider claims to the non-elected species (i.e., claims 3, 11-15, and 17).

Claims 1-2, 4-5, 7-9, 15, 17, 19, 20, and 40-41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Merrill et al. (US 6,512,544) in view of Sauer (US 6,320,616). This rejection is respectfully traversed. In order to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness "the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations." M.P.E.P. §2142. Neither Merrill et al. nor Sauer, even when considered in combination, teaches or suggests all limitations of independent claims 1 and 15.

Claim 1 recites a method of processing pixel signals comprising, *inter alia*, "clamping a capacitive storage node in a pixel signal processing circuit to a voltage less than a voltage corresponding to the pixel signal appearing on the pixel readout line." Claim 15 recites similar limitations for an imager. Applicants respectfully submit that Merrill et al. and Sauer, even when combined, do not teach or suggest these limitations.

To the contrary, Sauer teaches that the highest possible value of the Col_Read(x) line is 3.801V, and the voltage is lowered by the pixel signal readout. Col. 8, ln. 18-19. Activation of clamp line CL, "causes the APS reference voltage of 3.801 V to be applied to node 157." Col. 7, ln. 38-39 (emphasis added). Applicants respectfully submit that Sauer does not disclose, teach, or suggest clamping a capacitive storage node in a pixel signal processing circuit to a voltage less than a voltage corresponding to the pixel signal appearing on the pixel readout line, as recited in claims 1 and 15. Nor does Merrill et al. teach or suggest these limitations. Thus, Merrill et al. does not remedy the deficiencies of Sauer.

Since Merrill et al. and Sauer do not teach or suggest all of the limitations of claims 1 and 15, claims 1 and 15 are not obvious over the cited references. Claims 2, 4-5, 7-9, 17, 19, 20, and 40-41 depend, respectively, from independent claims 1 and 15, and are patentable at least for the reasons mentioned above, and on their own merits. Applicants respectfully request that the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of claims 1-2, 4-5, 7-9, 15, 17, 19, 20, and 40-41 be withdrawn and the claims allowed.

In view of the above, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance.

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Respectfully submitted,

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